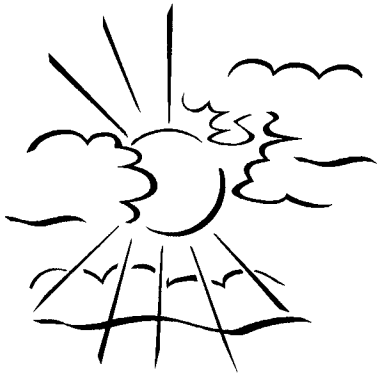


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Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, July 7, 2005

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TOPIC	PAGE
*Unintended Pregnancy	2-8
*Budget	9-13
Child Abuse/Neglect	14-15
Juvenile Justice	16-19

Michigan Report

July 6, 2005

GRANHOLM ANNOUNCES **UNINTENDED PREGNANCY EFFORTS**

The Department of Community Health will be overseeing a pilot program to help parents talk to teens about sex as part of Governor Jennifer Granholm's new effort to combat unintended pregnancies. But she also is seeking federal and private funding for birth control, she announced Wednesday.

Reducing the number of unintended pregnancies would not only reduce the number of abortions performed in the state, but also would improve the health of those who are born, reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect and reduce costs to Medicaid, Ms. Granholm said.

"Babies born of unintended pregnancies face challenges," said Surgeon General Kimberlydawn Wisdom. In addition to troubles after they are born because parents are not prepared, they also face prenatal challenges because the pregnancy is often discovered late so the mother has not been receiving proper nutrition and care, she said.

The keystone to the proposal is the "Talk Early, Talk Often" pilot program, which will provide 60 seminars around the state to aid parents of middle school-aged children talk to them about sex.

"It gives them the tools and the language to talk with their kids," Ms. Granholm said of the \$75,000 pilot program, noting that its tactics can also be applied to other issues beyond sexuality. Costs for the pilot are being paid through the maternal health block grant.

"Parents want to know how do they open the door of conversation," said Barbara Flis, a private health consultant who works with the Michigan Parent Teacher Student Association and who will be coordinating the program statewide. She hoped the program would reach 1,500 parents, but said it could reach as many as 3,000.

The program will be launched with a statewide town hall meeting hosted by First Gentleman Dan Mulhern and Ms. Wisdom, with the seminars planned between September and December.

Ms. Flis said 12 facilitators have been recruited around the state, including one designated for Hispanic populations, where teen pregnancy rates have not fallen as far as among other ethnic groups. So far facilitators have been designated for Detroit, the Upper Peninsula and Genesee, Grand Traverse, Jackson, Lenawee, Macomb, Muskegon,

Oakland, Ottawa and Wayne counties. A facilitator is still being sought for Berrien County, she said.

“It remains to be seen if we’ll have a huge demand that we’ll not be able to meet,” she said.

She hopes to expand the program next year, but said any continuation would be funded through private sources.

The Department of Community Health will also be asking for a federal waiver to allow the state to cover birth control prescriptions for all women below 150 percent of poverty. “We’ve asked the federal government to allow us to provide birth control to women who, if they got pregnant, would be eligible for Medicaid,” Ms. Granholm said.

She said some 65 percent of all pregnancies covered by Medicaid are unplanned, compared to 40 percent of all pregnancies in the state.

And South Carolina, with a similar waiver, saved \$56 million over three years, she said. A 10 percent reduction in unplanned pregnancies in Michigan would save the state \$27 million, she said.

The plan also includes SB 431 and SB 432, which would require health insurance companies that provide prescription coverage for erectile dysfunction medications to also provide birth control coverage. “How can we provide coverage to Viagra when we do not also provide contraception?” Ms. Granholm asked.

Viagra a focus in birth-control plan

July 7, 2005

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF
FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU CHIEF

Gov. Jennifer Granholm says contraceptives should be available to low-income women and all employees covered by health insurance plans that pay for drugs to treat erectile dysfunction.

The comment was part of a broader plan she announced Wednesday to reduce unintended pregnancies, which she said cost Michigan in money and misery.

The plan, which includes teaching parents how to discuss sex and abstinence with their children, would give contraceptives to low-income women through Medicaid. The Medicaid plan requires federal approval.

Granholm also urged the Legislature to require health insurance policies to cover contraceptives for women if they cover the cost of Viagra, an erectile dysfunction drug for men.

She said surveys show that unintended pregnancies account for 40% of all pregnancies in Michigan, costing the state millions of dollars in health care annually and resulting in abortions, infant deaths, sickness and child abuse.

Granholm's announcement was praised by health care advocates, but panned in part by the Michigan Catholic Conference.

The conference opposes requiring health insurers to cover the cost of contraceptives. Spokeswoman Kristen Cella said it would force employers who oppose contraception for religious reasons to provide it. That includes the Catholic Conference, which administers health insurance for the state's Catholic priests and school employees.

Cella said that by making contraceptives a medical benefit, "you're treating a woman's fertility as a disease."

Granholt's spokeswoman Liz Boyd said it's a matter of equity to require health insurance plans to include contraceptives if they cover male sexual-performance drugs like Viagra.

Granholt, who is Catholic, said offering contraceptives to low-income women could have a significant impact.

She said 65% of pregnancies among mothers eligible for Medicaid are unintended. Medicaid pays for about 40% of all births in Michigan.

Less controversial is a new pilot program that will instruct parents of middle schoolers on how to talk to their children about abstinence and sexuality.

The program -- called Talk Early, Talk Often -- will be headed by Barbara Flis, who ran a similar parent-education program through the Michigan Parent Teacher Student Association.

Flis said the workshops try to reach out to parents who are reluctant to ask for help in talking to their kids about sex and abstinence. She said the sessions will teach parents how to approach the subjects calmly and openly.

"When our young people perceive their relationships with their parents to be a positive one, they are less likely to engage in sexually risky behavior," Flis said.

Contact CHRIS CHRISTOFF at 517-372-8660 or christoff@freepress.com.

Granholm announces program to help parents talk about sex to kids

July 6, 2004
MLive.com

LANSING, Mich. (AP) - Parents who want to know how to best talk to their teenagers about sex can attend one of 60 workshops that will be held across the state when the new school year begins under a new program announced Wednesday by Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

Granholm, who has two teenage daughters, joked that she could learn a few things from the new pilot program "Talk Early, Talk Often."

"My instincts were all wrong," Granholm said during a news conference with Michigan Surgeon General Kimberlydawn Wisdom and Barb Flis, an independent health consultant who will head the pilot program.

The 90-minute workshops will be run by facilitators in a dozen regions across the state, including the Upper Peninsula and the counties of Traverse Bay, Oakland, Wayne, Ottawa, Genesee, Macomb, Jackson and Muskegon, Flis said. She is hoping 3,000 parents attend one of the free sessions.

The program is intended to give parents ideas to talk to their teenagers about sex, Flis said. For example, she said it is important for parents to ask open-ended questions rather than inserting their opinions into an issue.

The Democratic governor said the program is part of a bigger effort to keep down the number of unintended pregnancies in Michigan.

The state is asking for a federal waiver that would allow the Medicaid program to provide birth control to poor women who don't have insurance, Granholm said.

The governor also said she wants the Republican-controlled Legislature to send her bills that would require insurers that cover prescription drugs to also cover all contraceptives approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Sens. Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance, and Martha Scott, D-Detroit, introduced the bills in April, but they have not been taken up by the Senate Health Policy Committee.

Hammerstrom must determine whether there is support for the legislation in the Senate before trying to move it out of her committee, spokeswoman Amy Zaagman said.

Abstinence conference teaches teens

By Michelle Yaremchuk
Western Michigan University Herald Writer

June 29, 2005

Parents, teenagers and educators gathered in the Bernhard Center on Western Michigan University's main campus Saturday for the first annual abstinence conference "The Revolution Proclaiming Purity -- It Can Be Done."

The Kalamazoo Community-based Abstinence Initiative hosted the event, which held 350 to 400 people.

The day was filled with community speakers, breakout sessions for both parents and teens, and entertainment designed to inspire and inform.

Participants learned facts about Sexually Transmitted Illnesses, dating and refusal skills. They also heard stories from other youths who are abstaining. Parents were taught what they should know about teens and sex.

Teens who attended the conference said discussion between peers was important.

"It helps me keep my mind off it," said Jasmine Perin, 13, of Comstock. "If it opens kids up with their friends and stuff it can open them up with their family," she said.

Participants also said the conference was both fun and informative.

"It's helpful to kids so they don't get pregnant," said Darniecca Newsosa, 13, of Kalamazoo. "It sends the message that it can give you AIDS and a disease."

The event focused on encouraging youth and developing self-esteem.

The conference also centered on providing teens the information they need to make healthy living decisions, said Margi Williams, deputy director for New Genesis Inc., one of the event's sponsors.

"Everyone is talking about safe sex," Williams said. "Safe sex isn't working."

"You're worth more than a quick decision in the back of a car or in your house when your parents aren't around," Williams said. "The entire experience is more than that."

Saturday's conference was the culmination of the first year of an implementation grant the Kalamazoo community received from the federal government, said Cathy Wortham, a KCAI advisory council member.

Members of the KCAI spent two years researching material to use to teach abstinence only, Wortham said. They go to different sites, such as schools and churches, to teach the KCAI abstinence-only curriculum.

SECURITIZATION BILL INTRODUCED

A bill that would sell three-quarters of the state's annual payments from the national tobacco settlement in exchange for an immediate lump-sum payment was introduced Wednesday in the House.

The bill ([HB 5048](#)) is part of the House Republican plan to use the approximately \$3 billion that the state would receive from the transaction on diversifying the economy, securing the Merit Award and putting money into the Medicaid Benefits Trust Fund.

The \$3 billion would be put into a new Michigan Tobacco Settlement Securitization Authority, which would be governed by a board of directors. The board would consist of the treasurer, the CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and three persons with a background in business/financial fields that the governor would appoint.

Currently, the state receives about \$285 million a year from the tobacco settlement with those funds paying for the Merit Award and health care programs. Under securitization, investors would buy the rights to those annual payments by giving the state a lump-sum amount of \$3 billion.

House Republicans have proposed spending \$1 billion of the money on capital to lure cutting-edge businesses to the state, diversifying its economy; \$1.5 billion to create an endowment for the Merit Award and \$500 million on the Medicaid trust fund.

[Rep. Bill Huizenga](#) (R-Zeeland), who introduced the securitization bill, also introduced a bill Wednesday that appears to modify somewhat his original proposal on the economic diversification fund ([HB 5047](#)).

HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSE SECURITIZATION

Supporters of securitizing the state's tobacco settlement funds say it would allow investment in Michigan's economy, but health organizations argue it stinks as good fiscal policy and does not use the money as intended – stopping people from smoking.

Securitization is the practice of selling a state's annual payments from the national tobacco settlement to investors, who then sell bonds and give the money back to the state in a lump-sum payment. It is similar to a lottery winner who takes all his or her winnings at once instead of spreading them out and earning more money over time.

The Center for Tobacco-Free Kids is one such health organization opposing the idea, which has been used in 16 other states. Aaron Doeppers, Midwest regional advocate for the center, said securitization is a terrible idea.

“It’s horrible fiscal policy,” he said. “If (our kids) are going to be saddled with debt, let’s not make it the debt with the worst return rate imaginable.”

When the settlement was announced in 1998, many officials and organizations assumed the money would go for health-related efforts, but former Governor John Engler proposed the Merit Award program instead to provide college scholarships for performing well on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. Mr. Doeppers said as a result Michigan ranks dead last in using the money for health purposes.

“Michigan has done an abysmal job of using the payments as intended,” he said.

Officials have estimated Michigan would receive a \$4 billion lump sum if it sold its entire share of annual tobacco settlement payments. House Republicans have proposed selling three-quarters of the shares, and the resulting \$3 billion would be used to lure cutting-edge businesses to the state, secure funding for the Merit Award scholarship and put money toward the Medicaid Benefits Trust Fund.

Mr. Doeppers said those uses of the money are fine, but the act of securitization is helpful mainly to bankers and the bond industry, which stand to make a lot of money. On the other hand, Michigan is looking for some way to ease the budget problems – it is said that when the U.S. catches a cold, Michigan catches pneumonia.

“This is like cutting off your leg to cure the pneumonia,” Mr. Doeppers quipped. “There are better ways out there.”

Some of the states that have securitized used the money to alleviate budget deficits, but there is no such proposal in Michigan, which could lead to a lower credit rating. Governor Jennifer Granholm has said she supports securitization for investing in the state’s economy and would not object to using the money for the Merit Award, but is wary about putting funds into the Medicaid Benefits Trust Fund.

The American Heart Association also remains opposed to securitization simply because the diverted money would not be used for its original intent.

“States can save lives now by investing in these prevention and cessation programs and that is a big investment in the future,” said Cindy Hawken, director of communications for the heart association’s Greater Midwest affiliate. “We must remain true to the intent of the settlement and fully fund programs to fight tobacco.”

Raymond Cox, chairman of the Department of Finance and Law at Central Michigan University, said lower return rates might be good because they would result in more

upfront money. But he said securitization, if used to fix a budget problem, just delays hard decisions in how to operate a government because budget issues result from too many expenses and/or too little revenue.

“It’s just shuffling chairs on the Titanic,” said Mr. Cox on the intended uses for the money. “Securitization is, to a great extent, a gimmick.”

Detroit News

July 7, 2005

To the editor

Poor budget priorities

The state Chamber of Commerce calls for cuts in Medicaid. The Republican led Legislature responds with cuts to Medicaid, and co-pays and premiums for Medicaid clients to promote personal responsibility. This includes children ("Senate passes change in Medicaid premiums," June 15).

Fifty-five percent of the Medicaid population are kids under the age of 18 because their working-poor family makes less than \$375 per week. Yet children only spend 19 percent of the state's Medicaid budget. So much for "not balancing the budget on the backs of the vulnerable and children" to paraphrase the House's Price of Government priorities.

Michele Strasz

Williamston

Battle Creek Enquirer
July 7, 2005

Readers' Views

Remarks about women disturbing

I just read a letter with amazing interest in this newspaper from a man claiming that any woman who has a baby that she can't support should be cut off completely from asking for any help! This mentality is so disturbing to me, and please don't think that it's just Democrats with their hands out for free help.

Republicans do this all the time, too, and they make their claims to fame and fabulous wealth off of the lower-class persons all the time. They do it by not educating them, drugging them and the list goes on.

Then there are the political prisoners. You are not as superior as you want everyone to believe. My mother was one of these such women that had two babies she could not support! I've known many others over the years that were in such states.

According to your letter, you are totally blaming young and vulnerable women, and not one word was mentioned about the men that impregnate these women. According to you it's all the females' fault, and that kind of thinking is dangerous.

If you are going to write letters attacking vulnerable females, you should include the men that victimize these women, too. It's easy to drop-kick a young woman to make yourself appear superior, but it did not fool me at all. I don't like men who think women are somehow their garbage.

If you do not change your attitude, you will cost Republicans all votes from people like me. These young women and their children are facing very serious problems, and you are absolutely no help to them.

Kelly Wolfe
Battle Creek

Background checks would protect children from sex offenders

Tuesday, July 5, 2005
Bay City Times

Some ideas are so sensible that laws shouldn't be needed to enforce them.

Button up your pants.

Brush your teeth.

Keep criminals away from kids.

We were just as shocked as lawmakers in Lansing when a state auditor report released last year showed 222 licensed school workers, mostly teachers, had criminal records.

The state did not know about 178 of them. Five had convictions for criminal sexual conduct, robbery or assault.

These people shouldn't be in the same building as children, much less leading a classroom of kids.

We see smooth sailing, then, for a 14-bill package of legislation that GOP lawmakers designed to require background checks for all volunteers and employees of schools and day-care centers. Sex offenders would be banned from schools. Senate and House versions were passed last week.

The checks would address the concern that those convicted of sex crimes be kept away from the most vulnerable among us, the children.

That just makes sense.

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Critical head injuries send boy to Hurley

POLICE BLOTTER

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, July 05

By Ken Palmerkpalmer

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FLINT

Police are investigating an incident in which an infant boy suffered critical head injuries. The 5-week-old boy was taken to Hurley Medical Center by his mother about 10:30 p.m. Monday, police said. He had swelling on his face and brain. It was unclear if anyone was in custody.

Ken Palmer

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Teen's sentence undetermined

Thursday, July 07, 2005

By Theresa D. McClellan The Grand Rapids Press

OTTAWA COUNTY -- While Ottawa County Sheriff's Deputy Christopher Todd is continuing his rehabilitation sessions with an eye toward returning to work, the 16-year-old driver who struck Todd's patrol car last month has been charged in the crash.

The teen, whose name was not released because he is a minor, was charged last week in juvenile court with felonious driving, a high misdemeanor that could incarcerate him for two years, or cost him \$2,000 in fines.

But it will take some time for authorities to determine the proper punishment for the boy, who received his driver's license this year, said Assistant Kent County Prosecutor Vicki Seidl.

"It's a high misdemeanor, and a more serious charge like this, it ups the ante," Seidl said.

The crash occurred June 11 in Grand Rapids, when police said a speeding car driven by the teen crossed the Int. 196 median west of Butterworth Drive SW and struck Todd's cruiser nearly head-on.

Todd and a reserve officer, Marcus Hoogewind, 20, of Grand Rapids, were transporting a prisoner to a Kent County facility at the time of the crash. The impact mangled the left leg, ankle and foot of Todd, 27, who has worked full time with the department for four years.

Neither Hoogewind nor the prisoner were seriously injured. The 16-year-old driver and his 19-year-old passenger were treated at a hospital.

After stays at Spectrum Health Butterworth Campus and Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, both in Grand Rapids, Todd and his wife are staying with relatives in Grand Haven as he continues physical therapy.

"He is very positive and going into rehab with positive outlooks. There is no question in his mind he'll be back to work," Ottawa County Sheriff Gary Rosema said.

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Youth convicted of arson takes new turn in life Now Sean McEvoy tries to help others

Thursday, July 7, 2005

BY TOM TOLEN
News Staff Reporter

A lot has happened in the days since then.

Today McEvoy, takes a day off each month from his job as a restaurant cook to talk to youth about the dangers of starting fires. He is a regular speaker in a program called Straight Talk at the University of Michigan Medical Center Trauma-Burn Center in Ann Arbor.

The young people in the program, ages 8-17, are most often referred by the juvenile court but may be enrolled by parents who think their child has an abnormal curiosity about fire.

"(Sean McEvoy) voluntarily takes a day off work every month and spends an entire day at the center; he's now basically part of the program," says Pamela Pucci, nurse educator at the U-M trauma-burn center and program coordinator for Straight Talk. "He's incredible," Pucci says.

Until this story, McEvoy has not been identified by name in The Livingston Community News or The Ann Arbor News because he was a juvenile when charged and convicted. Now he has agreed to talk about how his life has changed over the last three years. McEvoy's parents declined to be interviewed for the story.

Pucci says McEvoy has done a 180-degree turnaround with his life.

"He made a mistake and, fortunately, nobody was hurt; the outcome could have been devastating," she says.

McEvoy became involved in the program after taking part in it himself as a convicted arsonist a couple of years ago. "We asked him to come back (because) we thought he had a great message for the kids, speaking about the legal consequences of his actions, and how many people it affected, how it changed his life," Pucci said.

McEvoy lives in Ypsilanti and works as a cook in a local restaurant. He earned his high school diploma while at the Arbor Heights juvenile center in Ann Arbor. He says he plans to enroll at Washtenaw Community College in the fall with dreams of becoming a psychologist.

"My experiences could help (people)," McEvoy says. "I've been through a lot. I've confronted a lot. I have some pretty good first-hand experience on issues."

Talking to McEvoy, who will be 19 in September, makes it apparent he is deeply remorseful about setting fire to the high school library April 8, 2002, which resulted in more than \$700,000 in damage. He pleaded guilty to arson and malicious destruction of property and spent two years at Arbor Heights.

The latest legal proceeding in his case is a Michigan Court of Appeals ruling, the upshot of which is that a \$715,581 restitution bill owed by McEvoy's parents could be reduced.

McEvoy has been giving the voluntary monthly presentations since November 2002 in the Straight Talk program. Pucci says the formerly shy young man has become a good public speaker and gained self-confidence as a result of his talks.

"He's come a long way," Pucci says. McEvoy, who went through the one-day Straight Talk course himself, decided he would like to help other kids by relating his experiences.

McEvoy believes he can help others by relating his experiences, and urges others to seek help if they are thinking about doing something destructive. "They should talk to somebody about it, and express (their anger) appropriately," he says.

McEvoy also has addressed a regional fire chiefs conference in Flint about his experiences. McEvoy says a presentation by a fire official when he was in the Straight Talk program helped him recognize the seriousness of his actions. "That (program) helped give me a better understanding of how much danger you put people through," he says.

In its ruling last week, the appellate court said restitution to SET-SEG, the district's insurance company, should have been based on the school district's actual loss, rather than on the replacement value of the damaged property, and sent the case back to Livingston County Probate Court.

Judge Susan Reck originally ruled that the parents are legally responsible for their son's actions and must pay full restitution but amended her ruling, determining they would not be held personally responsible for repayment. Instead, she ruled that State Farm Fire and Casualty, their insurer, would have to pay.

McEvoy was taking Paxil at the time he committed the arson but refuses to blame the legal prescription drug for his actions. Paxil, prescribed for depression and social anxiety, is a controversial drug that critics say when used by children may lead to suicidal

behavior or acting out. "I think every drug has different side effects for different people," McEvoy says, adding he "had a lot of issues" back then.

"There were a lot of things going on in my life," he says. McEvoy says counseling has helped him tremendously, and credits the Arbor Heights staff for much of his turnaround. "(The center) helped a lot," he says.

"He's a tremendous kid," Pucci says. "I think he's going in the right direction to get his life back."

Tom Tolen can be reached at ttolen@livingstoncommunitynews.com or at (810) 844-2009.

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